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DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST POLICY IN INDIA WITH A FOCUS
ON THE HILL REGION OF UTTAR PRADESH

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"The noblest and the best in our culture was born in the Ashrams. On the banks of the Saraswati where one of its ancient founder sang : May the Gods, the waters and the forest trees accept our prayers! The joy in our life, let us not forget, is interwoven with Vrindawan where Shri Krishna, who gave the message of life Eternal, played his flute to the rhythm of waving boughs and flowers dancing in the air. Forget not what he said - among trees I am the Ashivattha."

"Trees means water, water means bread and bread is life. The Purans rightly said that one tree is equal to ten sons. He gives moisture to land, gives breeze and shade, saves land from erosion, gives dry leaves for compost and rich fruits for food."

The above lines have been taken from a speech delivered by Shri K M Munshi during the Van Mahotsava celebrations in 1952. In his entire speech he lucidly brought out the significance of forests and the need to preserve this crucial gift of nature of our country. It is quite obvious that while forests are a very important natural resource for any country, their significance is all the more in a country like ours where they have their importance even from the spiritual point of view. A large number of philosophical works were brought out by the ancient Indian philosophers after years of meditation in forests.

Forests provide us with a large number of benefits and for the sake of convenience we can divide these into two broad categories:

A. Direct Economic Benefits : These cover aspects such as :

(i) Energy source : We are all aware that forests are an important renewable source of energy. In the modern world energy is needed for both commercial as well as non-commercial purposes. Despite the fact that modern form of energy such as nuclear and solar energy have been developed, firewood continues to be an important source of non-commercial fuel.

(ii) Industrialisation and Employment Generation : Forest products form the basic raw material for a wide range of industries. These industries may be small and cottage industries such as bidi manufacturing, rearing silk worms, mat making, resin tapping and rope making, etc. or larger industries such as paper industry, plywood and sports goods industry, etc. Besides this, forests have also catered to the needs of the Indian railways over the years by providing railway sleepers. While so many industries thrive on forest products, these industries also provide avenues for employment to the people both in rural and urban areas.

(iii) Development of Tourism : Forests provide the natural habitat for various wild life. Many such areas have been converted into wild life sanctuaries so that the wild life may be preserved. Over the years these sanctuaries have become centres of tourist attraction and if proper care and planning is done they can play a vital role in the development of tourism.

The second category of benefits are the non-economic benefits which can not easily be quantified but are very vital as they affect the quality of life itself.

B. Non-Economic benefits too can be further sub-divided into:

- (i) Amelioration of Climate : By influencing temperature, rainfall, humidity and wind forests help in amelioration of the climate. Forest cover makes air and soil temperature more equitable as compared to that in open spaces. They also influence the rainfall although there is dispute in this regard. Even then what is agreed beyond doubt is that at least over a limited area forests do increase the number of rainy days. Forests affect humidity by drawing up water from inside the earth and transpiring it in the atmosphere. Finally forests put a considerable check on wind velocity thereby reducing wind erosion.
- (ii) Conservation of Moisture : Forests facilitate proper utilisation of rainwater by controlling excessive run-off and forcing the water to infiltrate into the soil. This water can be utilised when needed later.
- (iii) Soil Conservation : At the canopy level the forest canopy prevents rain-drop erosion. At the ground level they regulate rain water run-off and within the ground the roots of trees hold the soil firmly thereby preventing loss of top soil.
- (iv) Flood Control : By preventing excessive run-off forests help in controlling floods. At the same time they help in reducing the siltation of river beds as well.

(v) Control of Environmental Pollution : Forests are the most effective and best pollutant sinks as they absorb the carbon dioxide and provide pure oxygen. However, their ability to perform this task depends on the total area under forests and their composition and condition.

It is, therefore, quite clear that the forestry sector is, to a considerable extent, capital producing sector. Forestry (the theory and practice of all that constitutes the creation, maintenance, conservation and scientific management of forests/plants communities, wildlife habitat, entailing sustained production and utilisation of multiple tree values - from shade, oxygen production, scenario to wood and other products) provides a ready basis for industrial and economic development.

The Indian rural economy depends basically upon forestry. Overwhelmingly, the dwellings are made of small timber, bamboo and thatching grass. The villager's mainstay is agriculture and their foremost needs are food, fuel, shelter, fodder and fertilizer. All these commodities are the products of a stable land system in which the protective role of trees is vital.

Although man had all along been aware of the significance of forests, he failed to give due consideration to the all important aspect of forest conservation. As a consequence there had been indiscriminate felling of trees and areas, which were once full of rich forests, have become quite barren thereby putting the very environment in danger. It is in this context that forest policy assumes great significance since any scheme of socio-economic development, where forest planning is an important part, has to strike an optimum balance at maintaining the ecological balance on

one hand and at satisfying the needs of the people for different forest products on the other.

It is for this very reason that the forest policy covers a very broad range and deals with both the social and economic aspects of forests. It has to keep in mind the interests of those who use forest products and so has to adopt proper legislation such that while these interests are taken care of, no one can cause undue damage to the forest wealth. Trees have a long gestation period and so proper planning is needed to ensure that the forest wealth which is depleted through legal felling is compensated through additional planting of trees on a year to year basis so that forests are also adequately regenerated.

With increases in population man has been cutting down forest areas in order to bring greater areas under cultivation. Thus, keeping the long term interests of the country a balance has to be struck between different types of land use.

There was a time when various items such as steel and cement etc. were not known in India and timber was in demand for all purposes especially teak wood. The traders exploited the forests mercilessly and their methods of extraction were extremely wasteful. Those were the days when forest fires too were a frequently occurring phenomenon.

The first step taken by the government in the area of developing a forest policy in India was to declare teak a reserved tree and in 1842 the first teak plantation was begun at Nilambur in Madras. A survey was shortly conducted with the objective of demarcating valuable forests. The work of building up the forest

estate commenced around 1865 and this included establishment of protective measures, preparation of working plans, study and application of silviculture, building of roads and the beginning of research.

The Indian Forest Act was also passed in the year 1865. This was to be revised in 1878 and 1927. The Act defined the legal system of forests and laid down procedures for reservation of forests. The basic objective of the Act was to attain forest management standards on lines of Western Europe. For this three important principles had to be followed:

- 1) that research was very crucial if progress was to be achieved;
- 2) that proper working plans were to be prepared for proper forest management; and,
- 3) that forests should be managed such that a sustained annual yield is ensured.

These steps yielded favourable results as there was high efficiency in research and application of silviculture practices. Working plans were prepared to cover almost 80 per cent of the forests and at the same time due attention was also paid to impart training to forest officials belonging to different cadres. In 1878 the Forest School, now known as the Forest Research Institute was inaugurated under the aegis of the Survey of India, at Dehra Dun.

A pronouncement was made in 1894 by the government of India through circular No.22F and set out five important principles:

- 1) that the retention of sufficient forests to preserve the climatic and physical conditions of the country come before anything else;

- 2) that the need for securing sufficient forests for the general well-being of people comes second in importance;
- 3) that cultivation comes before forestry, but it must be genuinely permanent cultivation and must not reduce forest lands below the minimum requirements of the country;
- 4) that the satisfaction of the wants of the rural and local population free or at concessional prices comes before revenue; and,
- 5) that after all the above have been satisfied, revenue should be realised to the fullest possible extent.

The pronouncement, therefore, was an excellent document and covered all possible angles starting from attainment of ecological balance, optimal land use, people's needs and the need to raise maximum revenue under given circumstances. We, therefore, notice that concern for environment was present even a century ago and it was duly accorded top priority even though terminologies like eco-balance, environmental preservation had not been coined then. Moreover, the document also gave importance to the fact that a minimum forest cover was an essential condition to maintain the eco-balance. Likewise, even the welfare aspect was given due weightage by clearly pointing out that the rural and local population must be provided their forest requirements either free or at concessional rates.

This circular also classified the forests on the basis of the five principles set out in the document and also included the grazing value of the forests. However, in actual practice the classification had only an academic value. It was also stated that the state forests are managed solely for public benefit and that the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number should prevail. The various provincial governments accepted these

principles and it was left to them to interpret them in terms of more detailed policy, depending on local conditions.

During the very initial stages of forest management not many people were aware of the multi-faceted value of forests, nor did they conceive of forests as a national asset. People took it for granted that forests were more than adequate in terms of the needs of the country with the exception of a few hardwood species. However, not many people had knowledge of the economic conditions and requirements. As a result no clear cut policy was evolved by local administration.

There is a considerable conflict between requirements of the people and forest conservation needs and the forest officers made a praiseworthy effort to strike a compromise between these conflicting needs. For this well chalked out plans were prepared. However, many a times sound tenets of forest conservation were sidelined for public interest. Thus one of the evils of a lack of clearcut policy was that whenever the forest officials tried to give a practical effect to the policy, they were viewed with hostility and suspicion by the people. Much could have been achieved in the wake of a clear cut policy.

To begin with, the forest policy was intended to be applicable only in the context of state forests. Privately owned forests remained outside its purview as even their exact extent was not known. In the hill areas the concept of forest conservation was generally incompatible with subsistence farming and people opposed the idea of reservation of forests which they traditionally looked upon as their own and in large areas people had been enjoying various rights. After the delimitation of

reserves, other classes of forests such as protected forests, unclassified forests, undermarked forests and unreserves were also constituted with the primary function of meeting local requirements and these constituted a considerable portion of the total forest area under the government. Despite the fact that rules were laid down to regulate the cutting of trees, they failed in preventing over-utilisation of these forests. No genuine effort was made to assess local requirements as it was probably felt that these forests along with private forests were sufficient to fulfil demands. The basic fact which was regrettably overlooked was that it is not only the valuable timber forests but all forests which give a sustained yield must be allowed to regenerate naturally or be regenerated. In fact, while laying down the policy the government should have given instructions to the provincial governments to assess the existing conditions. Since this was not the case, there was a steady depletion of the growing stock of all classes of forests which were set aside for fulfilling needs of the local population thereby increasing pressure on the reserve forests. The government kept pointing to the need to stabilise fuel and fodder reserves but in practice little was actually done in this direction. Consequently, only those provinces which adhered to the policy showed favourable results while in other provinces one witnessed deterioration, if not destruction of forests. Over-grazing too posed a major obstacle to the regeneration of forests.

It is quite clear that while a valuable forest estate had been built the forest policy fell short of the need of the time.

In fact, the approach to the forest policy should have been from the national perspective rather than the provinces be left to handle things in their own way.

In a note prepared by Mr A P F Hamilton for the Ministry of Agriculture clearly pointed out that the forests are economically one, although they have been divided by political or geographical boundaries. He felt that they are a national asset held in trust for the people and should, therefore, be managed through a national policy. Not that the policy laid down earlier was not sound, yet it was given limited application. Hamilton felt that the forest policy must look after the economic as well as the social aspect of forests, and that it must legislate for financial stability and continuity of action since trees have a long gestation period. For this well trained and contended staff is needed in adequate numbers. He gave equal stress on educating people such that they become aware of the significance of forests and the need to conserve them.

Then in 1944 Sir Herbert Howard prepared a note on the Post War Forest Policy for India and he too accepted that the Forest Policy of 1894 had incorporated excellent principles. However, the classes of forests were not exclusive and had nothing to do with the legal classification under the Act of reserved, village and protected forests. It further added that the four-folds classification of forests viz. protection, timber, minor forest and pastures is not exclusive since some forests may fall in more than one category. The other criticism of the forest policy was on the ground that it did not mention the principle of sustained yield which is important because : (i) a stable industry can not

be established with excessive fluctuations; (ii) such a large number of people are directly or indirectly dependent on forests for their livelihood that fluctuations would adversely affect their social conditions; and, (iii) the government budgets necessitate approximately equal revenue.

In 1940-41 forests covered only 14 per cent of the total area and even out of this only 9.3 per cent were classes as maintainable. The European countries, on the other hand, had around 25 per cent of the area under forests. Sir Howard, therefore, felt that in India the forest area should be 20-25 per cent and this must be properly distributed over the provinces. Some of the methods suggested for increasing the forest area were:

- 1) by bringing more government wastelands under forests;
- 2) by bringing more private area under forests; and
- 3) by exercising legal control over private forests.

The commencement of World War II gave a major set-back to forest management since war fellings were quite high. Before the war, the position of reserved forests was favourable. The working plans legislated for periodic stock taking. Although forests were not fully productive, a very satisfactory progress had been made over the 30 years since the forest department had taken over a depleted and often ruined forest estate. Although war fellings were considerable, they had not adversely affected the climatic and physical functions of the reserved forests. Maximum fellings had taken place in the United Provinces, Punjab, Central Provinces, Bombay and Madras. The working plans had been thrown out of gear and it called for a rapid revision of most working plans after the war.

The forestry sector not only involves very heavy investments but the gestation period too is long. Trees, depending on their variety, may take anything between 50-150 years to mature and so individuals do not normally go in for such investments. Sir Howard, therefore, felt that it was essential to take over all the forests as protection forests so as to make up the minimum estimated forest needs. Even private forests, according to him, should be subjected to certain forms of government control keeping in view the minimum area under forests. He, therefore, offered some suggestions in regard to private forests:

- (a) Proper forest management so as to have sustained yield must be given due stress and not just the emphasis on forest protection;
- (b) There should be effective policies to prevent the practice of trading on woodlands;
- (c) Regeneration of felled trees within a specified time should be made compulsory;
- (d) There should be proper control over the actual silviculture operations.

The history of forest policy in India thus dates back to the British period. In fact scientific forest management was given its base by Dr Brandis who was engaged by the government in 1856. He was made the first Inspector General of Forests in 1864 and the year 1865 witnessed the passing of the First Forest Act. The Act was replaced by the more elaborate provisions of Act VII, 1878 and Act XVI of 1927. In 1893 Dr Voolcker stressed the need to formulate a forest policy. This was declared on October 19, 1894 through the government of India resolution No.22-F and constitutes the basis for the forest policy of India.

Between 1894 and upto the eve of our Independence developments of far reaching importance had taken place. First of all the total population had gone up considerably and this had exerted a relentless pressure on forests and wastelands for securing greater area under cultivation. Besides this, the significance of forests from the point of view of their effect on environment had been better understood along with their economic benefits. The war period had already witnessed heavy fellings in order to ensure war supplies. Even the post war schemes of reconstruction involved industrial expansion, river valley projects and development of transport and communications which meant that the pressure on forests continued. All these factors made it essential to reformulate the forest policy urgently so as to meet the changed circumstances.

The approach to the forest policy of Independent India was initiated by Shri K M Munshi. As the Minister of Food and Agriculture in the Union Government he drew attention of everyone to the fact that forests deserved immediate attention. The first Van Mahotsava was held in 1950 where he delivered a highly thought provoking speech. It evoked a great response and nearly four crore trees were planted. An equal number was again planted during the next Van Mahotsava (1951).

The Central Advisory Board of Forest Utilization was reconstituted to secure liaison between research and industry. So also was the Forest Research Institute of Dehra Dun reorganised.

The existing forest policy, although good in itself, needed re-orientation in the light of changes which had taken place and

so a Board of Forestry at the ministerial level was constituted to formulate a National Forest Policy. The National Forest Policy was announced on May 12, 1952 and was formulated on the basis of six paramount needs.

- 1) The need for evolving a system of balanced and complementary land use, under which each type of land use is allotted to that form of use under which it would produce most and deteriorate least.
- 2) The need for checking : (i) denudation in mountainous regions, on which depends the perennial water supply of the river system whose basins constitute the fertile core of the country; (ii) the erosion progressing along the treeless banks of the great rivers leading to ravine formation, and on vast stretches of undulating wastelands depriving the adjoining fields of their fertility; and (iii) the invasion of sea-sands on coastal tracts, and the shifting of sand-dunes, more particularly in the Rajputana desert.
- 3) The need for establishing treelands wherever possible, for the amelioration of physical and climatic conditions promoting the general well-being of the people.
- 4) The need for ensuring progressively increasing supplies of grazing; small wood for agricultural implements, and in particular of firewood to release cattle-dung for manure to step up food production.
- 5) The need for sustained supply of timber and other forest produce required for defence, communications and industry.
- 6) The need for realisation of maximum annual revenue in perpetuity consistent with the fulfilment of the needs enumerated above.

All the forests whether state or privately owned were to be classified as follows:

- 1) Protection Forests : Those forests which must be preserved or created for physical and climatic considerations;
- 2) National Forests : Those forests which have to be maintained and managed to meet the needs of defence, communications, industry and other general purposes of public importance;

- 3) Village Forests : Those forests which have to be maintained to provide firewood to release cow dung for manure and to yield small timber for agricultural implements and other forest produce for local requirements, and provide grazing land for the cattle; and,
- 4) Tree Lands : Those areas which, though outside the scope of ordinary forest management, are essential for the amelioration of the physical conditions of the country.

Needless to say that these classifications are illustrative and not mutually exclusive since each forest performs more than one function. However, forests are to be so managed that the highest efficiency in respect to the chief function assigned to it is achieved. Every sizeable forest irrespective of its composition, location or category serves a protective as well as a productive function and its utility may be of local, regional or national significance. Finally, since forests are of a national significance they should be administered from the point of view of national well-being irrespective of their functions and ownership.

Two more aspects were also included with the caution that they should not be given undue weightage but should be combated : (a) that the needs of the local population must be met to a reasonable extent but the national interest should not be sacrificed; (b) that care should be taken in case where forests are cut down for agriculture purposes for this process not only deprives the local population of fuel and timber but also because it also reduces the natural defence of land against dust storms, hot dessicating winds and erosion.

The policy makers were fully aware of the fact that there should be optimal land use and that in each region it was essential to have a specified portion of land permanently under

forests. It was, therefore, decided that the country as a whole should maintain one-third of its land under forests. On the mountaneous tracts like Himalayas, Deccan etc. forests should cover 60 per cent of the area to protect against denudation and erosion and for maintaining the physical balance. In the areas of the plains, however, 20 per cent forest area was considered sufficient. Extension of tree lands was to be concentrated along river banks and along other convenient tracts not suitable for agriculture. Areas which had forest area below the prescribed minimum were expected to undertake afforestation programmes on marginal lands and eroded river and village wastelands. In case any area had a forest area above the prescribed norm, these were not be sacrificed. Since some areas were not ideally suited for having extensive forests they were to be compensated by those states where conditions were favourable such that the overall national average is maintained.

Since cattle grazing was an important aspect it was felt that policy in this regard should be clearly defined. Although grazing is incompatible with scientific forestry it has to be accepted as a reality since grazing has to be carried on. In some cases moderate grazing does little harm and may even be indirectly beneficial by reducing the risk of fire. But what is essential is that grazing has to be regulated as regards the place, time and number of cattle admitted for grazing. It was, therefore, felt that since continuous grazing by large heards is destructive, rotational grazing should be introduced. Besides, the service should not be provided free as this again would lead to indiscriminate grazing. However, a fee should be charged with the

intention of regulating the grazing activity rather than with a view to earning revenue. At no cost should grazing be permitted in regeneration areas and areas which have young plantations. Moreover while there should be restriction on the grazing of sheep, goats should not be allowed to graze. To control grazing the creation of special fodder reserves under strict rotational control was suggested.

It was felt that the forest policy required scrupulous regard for sustained yield in the management of all classes of forests. Sustained yield was essential to ensure a steady forest revenue and adequate forest supplies for the various forest based industries. The forest policy also laid stress on forest administration, forest legislation, forest education and forest research.

As the years passed by there was an ever increasing demand for fuel, fodder and other forest produce. It became increasingly more difficult for the officials of the forest department to maintain security within the forests and this resulted in a steady depletion of the forest wealth. Besides over felling of trees the hill areas also witnessed an increase in the resin tapping industry as well as over extraction of medicinal plants. The prices of resin as well as medicinal plants had been going up and this attracted more and more people. Resin tapping of such a high magnitude led to destruction of trees while the mad rush for medicinal plants led to some species on the verge of extinction.

Between 1970-80 the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh witnessed a mass movement for the protection of the forests. The movement

known as 'Chipko movement' was headed by Shri Sunderlal Bahuguna who along with the local people especially the women folk fought against the indiscriminate felling of trees, excessive resin tapping and over extraction of medicinal plants.

In 1976 the Five Point programme of Sanjay Gandhi was launched and the government decided to put an end to green felling. Even resin tapping was brought under control such that it was reduced to around one-third of what it used to be during its peak. Greater care was also given to check over extraction of medicinal plants. A complete ban was imposed on the extraction of those species which were facing the danger of extinction.

Then in 1980 the government passed the Forest Conservation Act. Till then forest land was being given for non-forestry purpose. The Act was simple but firm and states that "no forest land will be given for non-forestry purposes without the sanction of the Government of India." It is true that the Act has caused some difficulties. It has not only affected the lives of the people but at times it also proves a bottleneck in the quick implementation of development plans such as construction of roads, bridges, hydel lines etc. wherever these schemes are passing through a forest area. In a forest area they can be taken up only after proper clearance has been obtained from the forest department. Consequently there are unnecessary delays at times in the implementation of schemes.

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All along the National Forest Policy enunciated in 1952 remained unchanged. But then need was being felt to introduce some amendments in it and this was done in 1988. Its main

objectives are being outlined in brief below:

- 1) Maintenance of environmental stability and the restoration of ecological balance.
- 2) To protect the national heritage through preservation both flora and fauna of the forests.
- 3) To devise means for the preservation of soil and water resources in order to guard against flood as well as droughts.
- 4) To check the expansion of sand-dunes in the desert areas of Rajasthan and along coastal highways.
- 5) To reclaim the inferior and uncultivable land through afforestation thereby increasing forest area.
- 6) To meet the fuel, fodder, small timber and other minor forest produce requirements of the village population as well as the tribal people.
- 7) To increase the productivity of forests in keeping with the growing national needs.
- 8) To increase the efficient use of forest products and to decrease the use of timber and fuel through increased supply of alternatives to timber and fuel through increased supply of alternatives to timber and fuel.
- 9) To achieve the above mentioned goals and preserve forests an extensive mass movement through the active cooperation of women is proposed to be launched.

The following aspects of forest management have to be ensured if forest management is to be achieved.

- (a) Forests and forest lands have to be fully protected and productivity of forests has to be increased. All areas devoid of forests, deserts and hilly slopes must be provided vegetation cover as far as possible.
- (b) The practice of cutting forest area for agricultural purposes has to be totally discouraged keeping in view the minimum area under forest cover.
- (c) National Parks should be extended in order to preserve the physical diversity.
- (d) Afforestation around rural areas should be encouraged such that the needs of the local population is readily met without exerting any undue pressure on the existing forests.

(e) To provide for the food and employment needs of the tribal population and those living in the vicinity of forests through protection of forests and by increasing the productivity of minor forest products.

For this a number of afforestation programmes will have to be launched. Those which could be fruitful are programmes to grow fuel providing trees and fodder crops on wastelands; to develop trees along canals, railway tracks, highways, rivers and on lands which are under state corporations and autonomous organisations. Gram sabha lands, which have not been put to other uses already, can also be taken up under the afforestation programme. Besides this there is also the need to make amendments in the land laws.

We have in the preceding pages seen how the forest policy evolved over the years in India starting from the days of the British rule and upto the latest amendments of 1988.

In the context of Uttar Pradesh the hill areas occupy a place of considerable significance from the point of view of forests and so it will be worthwhile to have a brief look as to how these developments in the forest policy affected these areas.

Beginning from the days of the British Raj conflicts over forests claims were very common in the hills since they were a reflection of the conflict against the British rule. Forest administration in the hills during the days of the British can be divided into four periods.

The first period (1815-1878) begins with the British occupation of Kumaun and Garhwal in 1815 and culminates with the passing of the forest Act in 1878. During this period the village boundaries were demarcated and within each village people exercised their rights of grazing and collecting timber and fuel-

wood. Since there was no system of forest conservation, the most valuable forests were cut down ruthlessly by government contractors.

The next period (1878-1893) was the one during which the boundaries of different forest tracts in Almora, Naini Tal and Garhwal were demarcated and declared as protected forests. These forests were situated in the Bhabhar region at the foothills and so they did not in any way affect the day to day life of the village folks living in the hills. However, towards the end of 1893 all wastelands were notified as protected forests and the government adopted a policy of forest conservation.

The third period began in 1894 when legislation was passed for the preservation of species such as deodar, cypress, chir, box, sal, shisham, tun and khair and extends upto 1911. Government issued further instructions whereby the protected forests were classified as 'closed civil forests' and 'open civil forests'. In the former the district magistrate had the authority to look after the rights and concessions of the villagers while in the latter category villagers were free to exercise their rights freely.

The government held a meeting in 1910 on forest management and a new settlement of forests commenced in 1911 under which forests were classified as A B and C type forests.

A Class forests were those which were primarily for the fulfilment of the requirements of the local people and for the sale of forest produce. These were under the forest department.

B Class forests were meant for the preservation of fuel and grass. Although these too were under the forest department the controls were less severe.

C Class - The remaining forest land came under this category and since they were not under control of the forest department people had full rights with respect to timber fuel and grazing.

The hill population mostly relied on forests and forest produce. Till the schemes of forest management were not framed people had absolute right over them. It was quite natural, therefore, that the introduction of scientific control and management were resented by the people as they felt that their rights were being encroached upon. Before launching the forest policy information was not collected regarding the requirements of different villages, nor was compensation awarded to those people whose rights were disregarded. The first signs of a serious resentment surfaced in 1906 in the state of Tehri Garhwal while a forest around 14 miles from Tehri town was being inspected before being brought under reservation. The local people drove away the forest officials and even the efforts of the local king proved futile in controlling the anger of the people.

The fourth and final phase of forest management during the British begins in 1911 and continued till 1947. The British policy during this period was mainly to survey, examine and demarcate extensive areas of tractless forests and organise its protection against fire and other damage. Besides this, work of enumerating valuable trees and to plan for their judicious exploitation was also carried out. Finally efforts were also made to record minutely, in conjunction with civil authorities, all

existing rights and to try and prevent uncontrolled grazing, by local people on one hand and theft and indiscriminate fellings by contractors on the other.

While Tehri had taken the lead, resentment had also been very much there in Kumaun as well because of the preferential treatment given by the British to a particular class. Although a mass meeting was held in Almora in 1907 but nothing fruitful resulted. People then started burning down forests to show their anger and resentment. The Kumaun Association was formed in 1916 in order to deal with the forest problems of Kumaun and Shri Govind Ballabh Pant was made its general secretary. He presided over its last annual session in 1921. In the same year the government appointed a committee to look into the grievances of the people of Kumaun and Garhwal. The committee reclassified forests into two categories: (a) Class I forests were those which were under the direct control of the District Magistrate; and, (b) Class II forests were those which were controlled by the forest department.

By and large the Kumaun Grievances Committee gave a free hand to the villagers regarding felling of trees. Consequently maximum deforestation took place between 1924 and 1926. Class I forests were handed over to the Revenue Department. The steps taken were very shortsighted because while people's resentment died down for some time it led to adverse affects which were to be felt later. Class I forests began deteriorating very rapidly as a result of lack of protection and overfelling. It was as late as 1964 that the Class I forests were once again transferred to the Forest department.

The period of Civil disobedience (1930-31) was also the period of unrest in connection with the forest question. To display their displeasure people set forests on fire and the forest officials were subjected to physical violence. In 1936 the issue of rights and concessions of the hill population was raised yet again and a Grievances Committee was constituted whose report was published in 1939. Grazing rights of the people were relaxed and recommendations were made relating to:

- (a) improvement in communications;
- (b) fresh demarcation of forest boundaries;
- (c) settlement of shilpikars;
- (d) extension of resin industry in Garhwal;
- (e) arms licenses;
- (f) sawyers; and,
- (g) introduction of pig and porcupine traps.

The grazing rights were further relaxed through a legislation passed on March 22, 1941. This caused a great damage to the broad leaved forests as also the chir forests. At the same time regeneration of blue pine, cypress and deodar received a major set back. There were no further changes in the forest policy till the eve of our Independence. However, a legacy of suspicion and resistance had been created between the people and the authority and this could not be cured entirely even after Independence.

The people's demand for rights and their reluctance to accept the forest policy continued even after Independence and so another committee was set up under Shri Baldev Singh Arya to look into the grievances of the people. This committee provided further concessions.

Indiscriminate cutting of trees, excessive resin tapping and unscientific extraction of medicinal plants led to the people's movement headed by Shri Sundarlal Bahuguna who made the local

people aware regarding the significance of the forest resources and the danger that was faced if the eco balance is disturbed.

The five point programme of 1976 aimed at putting an end to the felling of green trees, excessive resin tapping as well as over extraction of medicinal plants. This was followed by the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 through which no forest land could be put to non-forestry use without the prior permission of the Government of India. Finally, in order to make room for the changes which had taken place in the country since the passing of the National Forest Policy in 1952, an amended Forest Policy was announced in 1988.

This, in brief, is a brief historical record of the development of the Forest Policy in India with a special reference to the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh. While the policy may have put the people to a certain degree of inconvenience particularly in the hills, its significance has to be viewed in the overall national interest. Any further deterioration of the forest wealth in the hills could endanger the environment beyond human control. It is in this light that the policy should be viewed. Efforts should, therefore, be made to educate the people such that they may extend their cooperation in preserving the forest wealth.

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